FBI says Ray lone assassin

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI investigated Dr. Martin Luther King's death thoroughly and honestly and concluded correctly that James Earl Ray was the lone assassin, a Justice Department task force reported Friday.

Though mysteries linger in the case, there is no new evidence warranting further investigation, the task force of five lawyers and two research analysts said.

"The task force has concluded that the investigation by the FBI to ascertain and capture the murderer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was thoroughly, honestly and successfully conducted," the report said. "The sum of all of the evidence of Ray's guilt points to him so exclusively that it most effectively makes the point that no one else was involved."

The task force concluded that various conspiracy theories, including those advanced by Ray himself, are without foundation. Ray's stories are contradictory and self-serving, the report said.

The FBI, despite its longterm and probably illegal campaign to harass King and discredit him as a civil rights leader, generally undertook an aggressive probe of his murder on a motel balcony in Memphis on April 4, 1968, the task force said. It added that the bureau checked out the conspiracy theories but found nothing to them.

The task force lawyers did find some things to criticize about the FBI probe.

It said the bureau failed to investigate leads suggesting that Ray and members of his family were in touch after his escape in 1967 from the Missouri state prison and said "The bureau should have pursued this line of the investigation more thoroughly."

It also complained that the FBI under director J. Edgar Hoover refused to keep then Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark and other officials informed about details of the probe. And it said the department failed to exercise its supervisory authority over the bureau.

Former Atty. Gen. Edward H. Levi launched the department review last April to determine whether the FBI was implicated in the assassination, whether anyone should be prosecuted for the harassment of King, and whether there was evidence requiring a further probe of the assassination.

He called for the review because of disclosures of fresh details about Hoover's animosity toward King and of Hoover's efforts to discredit the civil rights leader through wiretaps, buggings, and by circulating derogatory information about his personal life.

"The task force is satisfied that the FBI did a credible and thorough job in attempting to identify any possible conspiracy," the report said. "In all the years following the assassination, the investigation has failed to reveal any connection between any alleged conspirator and James Earl Ray ... The overwhelming evidence indicates that Ray was almost totally alone during the year after his escape from the Missouri state prison."